



Breana Burgess (held aloft) is aided by teammates (from left) Jenna Lefner, Savannah Bassett, Chantel Arias and Stacey Miller. Not shown, Meagan Kanig and Shannon O’Grady. (Photo by Scott Jorgensen/IVN)

Competition cheer squad at I.V. rises to challenges

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

The final bell of the day rings at Illinois Valley High School, and the hallways immediately fill with students. Meanwhile, members of the school’s competition cheerleading squad converge in office clerk Mary Paul’s classroom, where they chat before changing into their practice attire.

Head coach Heather Merrill, a former IVHS cheerleader and Paul’s daughter, brings the girls together and sends them off to run laps in Ken Mann Memorial Gym. A few minutes later, the girls return, at which point they grab a short stack of mats and carry them the short distance to the now-empty cafeteria.

The girls all appear in good spirits, having just come off of a second-place performance at the Emerald Holiday Cheer Invitational in Springfield during Christmas break.

That distinction is especially important, considering that this is the first year the cheerleading squad has had two separate teams. According to Merrill, the school had a competition squad five years ago, but all its members belonged to the regular cheerleading team.

The team was dissolved after two years, following the graduation of its seniors and a lack of participation. “We lost the commitment level and the ability level, and that’s why we had to quit doing it,” Merrill recalled.

But now, the seven-member competition squad is looking to build on its success and bring IVHS statewide recognition. According to cheerleader Meagan Kanig, it has not come easy. “We’ve had a lot of

difficulties, and had to overcome some problems that most cheerleading squads don’t have,” Kanig said.

The girls managed to raise nearly \$2,000 during the summer, but since the team is classified as a club sport, it receives no funds from the school. As such, team members have to pay for uniforms, transportation to competition and any other expenses that may arise.

Indoor practice space is also an issue, as the squad must often share facilities with other school activities.

Despite these challenges, the team is preparing for competition Saturday, Jan. 13 in Springfield; and a Jan. 20 event at South Umpqua High School, 20 miles south of Roseburg. All indications are that the girls are ready.

“I’m glad we finally got the opportunity to get there,” Kanig said.

To prepare, the squad has been working on its jumps, back handsprings and other exercises -- all of which are more difficult than they look.

“Most people think it’s just jumping around, but there’s more to it,” said cheerleader Shannon O’Grady. “People don’t realize it’s actually hard.”

Minor injuries are not uncommon among cheerleaders, and many of the stunts require arm and leg strength. That is not to mention the time and effort that goes into choreography and dance moves.

In the future, the team would like to attract sponsorships and donations to help pay costs of competition participation. But in the meantime, they’re focused on bringing home more trophies.

“These girls are ready to take on the challenge,” Merrill said.

I.V. Pregnancy Center’s lead advocate honored

By SCOTT JORGENSEN
IVN Staff Writer

Corinna Fierro clearly remembers her first trip to The Pregnancy Center of the Illinois Valley.

She was 15 years old, frightened and thought she might be pregnant. But even though her pregnancy test turned out positive, Fierro’s fears had subsided by the time she left the building.

“The lady gave me a big hug and made me feel comfortable,” Fierro said. “It totally changed my life.”

These days, Fierro, 31, serves as the center’s lead client advocate. She has devoted the last several years helping other girls in similar situations.

“There is a way to get through it, and there is a light at the end of the tunnel,” Fierro said.

When assisting clients, Fierro draws on her own experience of growing from a teen-ager to a mother.

“It was a process,” she said. “It took a while. But I wanted to come back and help out.”

Once she became actively involved in the pregnancy center’s operations, Fierro concentrated her efforts on “helping the center grow and come together.”

Her proudest accomplishments include decorating the center, with an em-

phasis on creating a welcoming atmosphere.

“We did want it to be inviting for girls to have a place,” Fierro said.

Fierro proudly states that the center offers a variety of services, such as free

pregnancy tests; labor, parenting and delivery classes; and a “mommy market,” complete with baby clothing, cribs and other child-rearing es-

entials.

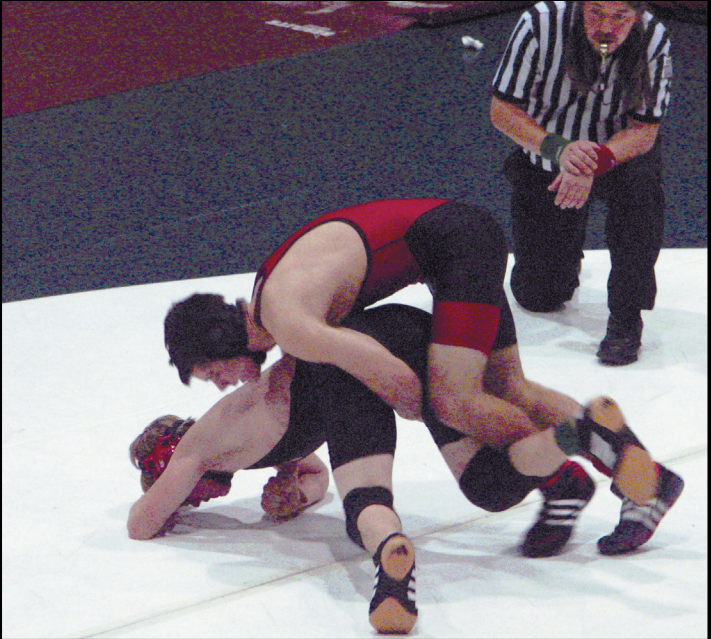
“Girls come in not knowing this stuff’s there for them,” Fierro said. “But we try and get them set up so they are prepared.”

Post-abortion counseling is also available, she said, adding that girls in that situation won’t have to worry about being judged negatively at the center.

“They’re still human, and need to be loved like anyone else,” Fierro said. “We still have open arms when they come back.”

Her years of hard work and dedication have not gone unnoticed, as she was honored as the center’s client advocate of the year during December. She was surprised when she found out, but is just happy to be making a difference where it’s needed the most.

“I’m always learning more, being more comfortable and wanting to do more,” Fierro said.



COUGAR WRESTLERS CONTENDERS -- Illinois Valley 3-A wrestlers captured third place Saturday, Jan. 6 with 138.5 points at the Willamette Invitational in Eugene. Twenty schools were entered, including several in the 5-A and 6-A classes. For I.V., 1st-place finishers were Sam Winter at 135 pounds, and Jesse Swift at 145. Other Cougar placers were Dusty Culver, 5th, 103; Quayde Fisher, 4th, 125; Adam Miller, 3rd, 152; Tim Pope, 5th, 189; and Lance Tausaga, 5th, 215. Shown is Winter wrestling a North Salem competitor in the championship round. (Photo by Ward Winter for IVN)



ILLINOIS VALLEY GRAPPLERS lost a tight match to Phoenix 33-29 in Ken Mann Memorial Gym Thursday night, Jan. 4. The Cougars were missing four members due to injuries and illness. I.V. 1st-place winners were Chris Culver, 103; Sam Winter, 135; Thomas Parker, 140; Jesse Swift, 160; and Lance Tausaga, 215. (Photo by Dale Sandberg for 'Illinois Valley News')

To the Root

Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS)



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**Education is like a double-edged sword.
It may be turned to dangerous uses
if it is not properly handled.**

- Wu Ting-Fang -

**Science is organized knowledge.
Wisdom is organized life.**

- Immanuel Kant -

Weather Watch

Illinois Valley

Wednesday, Jan. 10: Considerable cloudiness
High--48 Low--28

Thursday, Jan. 11: Chance of morning flurries
High--39 Low--23

Friday, Jan. 12: Clearing
High--42 Low--27

Saturday, Jan. 13: More sun
High--39 Low--33

Sunday, Jan. 14: Less sun
High--45 Low--34

Monday, Jan. 15: Intermittent clouds
High--44 Low--33

Tuesday, Jan. 16: Sunny
High--49 Low--27



Following are the high-and-low temperatures, and rainfall, recorded in O’Brien by Cheryl & Harry Johnson.

*Fri., Dec. 29: 39-25
*Sat., Dec. 30: 43-29
*Sun., Dec. 31: 43-32
*Mon., Jan. 1: 46-31
*Tue., Jan 2: 57-38
*Wed., Jan. 3: 53-42 2.80
*Thurs., Jan. 4: 42-32 0.63

Following are the high-and-low temperatures, and rainfall, recorded in Cave Junction at Mountain Wind Farm.

*Fri., Dec. 29: 47-26
*Sat., Dec. 30: 50-29
*Sun., Dec. 31: 55-32
*Mon., Jan. 1: 48-31
*Tue., Jan 2: 62-37
*Wed., Jan. 3: 54-41 3.08
*Thurs., Jan. 4: 45-31 0.47



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